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PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO*Self-administration* in Algeria*

Under the Ben Bella régime, as under that of Boumedienne ~~self-~~ administration appeared as the fundamental element of Algeria. Nevertheless, and above all after the coup d'état of June 19th, 1965, which put Boumedienne and the "Council of the Revolution" in power, such a large number of criticisms were formulated concerning self-administration such as it was practiced at the time of Ben Bella that one could almost consider them as a proof of its failure. There is no end, on the other hand, to the declarations that it must be defended, reinforced, given a veritable content (previously the Army was not known to be particularly favorable to this form of administration). Without self-administration, it is said, there can no longer be a "socialist" Algeria, nor even an "Algerian way to socialism". The régime in Algeria, whatever it may be, is obliged to affirm this option, in order to enjoy some measure of popular support, however weak. Therefore these declarations.

It was self-administration which made it possible for Ben Bella to

* We have used the term self-administration to translate the French *autogestion*. Naturally, self-administration does not convey all of the connotations, both political and ideological, of *autogestion*, however, it seems to be the term most closely corresponding to the Algerian system.

take all powers into his own hands; it was self-administration — among other things — which served as a justification for the conquest of power by the Army, three years after Ben Bella's accession to the presidency. Since it is self-administration which lends the régime its color, it would seem appropriate to submit it to analysis.

Once the effervescence of independence had passed in Algeria, questions began to be posed. Who was going to govern? Fighting broke out in the *bled*; the frontier army advanced into the country, forcibly putting down the *maquis* in the interior. The Algerian combatant began to realize to his amazement that a serious conflict existed between what was called the "frontier army" — of which Boumedienne was the commander — and the G.P.R.A. (Provisory Government of the Algerian Republic). Ben Bella, after his liberation, arrived at Tlemcen, where he was joined by all those who had become aware that the army was gaining ground over the G.P.R.A. The struggle for power was launched. The "historic chiefs"¹ were all convinced of their abilities and of their right to supreme command.

With the crisis of July 1962, the G.P.R.A. was definitively eliminated from the directing of politics, to the profit of Ben Bella and Khider (named general secretary of the F.L.N.), who were supported by Boumedienne and his army.

In the meantime, the French colony (obliged, after its massive participation in the quasi-Fascist O.A.S., to burn its ships behind it) fled from Algeria, after having tried to sack everything, abandoning the remainder of its possessions. Suddenly the factories had no more directors, no more technicians, the plantations no more managers; they became "vacant". The economy was completely disorganized. It was urgently necessary to bring it under control again, if famine was to be avoided. Young labor organizes, fresh out of prison, began to canvas the countryside, urging the peasants to go back to work without further delay. "The boss isn't there, well, we'll forget about him for the moment. Later we'll see". (The F.L.N. party supported these worker-leaders to a greater or lesser degree, in opposition to the representatives of the central power which were the special delegations and the prefectural authorities, who had the task of enforcing the ordinance of August 4th, 1962 concerning the protection and administration of the vacant properties, which guarantees the proprietors the maintenance of their rights — and the further task of naming provisory administrators until the return of the former owners). This was the campaign of the fields. Urged on by those

¹ The "historic chiefs" are the survivors of the team of leaders who started the armed fight against the French on November 1st, 1954. Independence was acquired on July 5th, 1962.

few organizers and responsible persons of the party for whom the work in the fields was more important than the battle for power that was going on in Algiers, the peasants mobilised once again, and rediscovered the enthusiasm which had immediately followed independence. The campaign was a success: the majority of the arable land was cultivated, very often with whatever primitive means happened to be at hand. Incredible at first, the agricultural workers began to realize that a plantation can be made to "work" even when the boss is not there.

These vacant plantations were all situated in the richest regions of the country, those where wine, fruits, vegetables, and grain are produced. This type of agriculture requires a relatively small working force (except during certain periods of the year) on land which cannot, if the enterprise is to be profitable, be broken up into small farms. This is why the peasants generally preferred to continue to work these lands in common, rather than dividing them up, at the same time turning over the administration of the plantations to those of their comrades whom they considered to be the most competent or the best acquainted with administrative matters. This is self-administration. The same phenomenon was repeated in the factories and workshops which had been abandoned by the "*pièds-noirs*", whenever the machines and material were still in working condition, or could be repaired by the workers themselves. Unemployment, aggravated by the departure of the French, was threatening from every direction. Self-administration was born, then, from the initiative of the workers and peasants, and aided by a few responsible labor-organizers and politicians who were influenced by Yugoslavia's experience and were very conscious of the necessity of returning to work.

Although the juridical basis was lacking, the peasants were proud to belong to such administrative committees, for thanks to self-administration they had the impression that the land belonged to them to a certain degree, even if collectively; on the other hand, they also had something to say, if they wished, every time there arose a problem in the daily organisation of the work. Besides, it was the only domain in which they were really able to express themselves, for when more important questions came up those responsible considered themselves the only ones capable of dealing with them. These responsible individuals had been for the most part "parachuted" by national organisations (union, party, army, etc.) which ever since independence had set up veritable feudalism in the various localities, usually after having forced the more honest of the militant leaders out of positions of responsibility.

Since at this time no text existed which explained what self-administration should be, everything was possible, both in a positive as well as in a negative sense: under the guise of "Algerianisation", new bosses had installed themselves in positions of management, whose facile use of

the socialist terminology of the times enabled them to acquire full powers, with the workers not daring to intervene: they believed that self-administration was what they were experiencing daily, and even if they were not very satisfied, it was at least better than what they had known before. Besides, since most of the peasants could neither read nor write, they were fairly obliged to place their trust in their "representatives", who often enough drew profit from it.

In addition, the F.L.N. party, party both of the *avant-garde* and of the masses at the same time (no one knew exactly, since the definition varied with the necessities of the moment), existed only in theory. The most active and conscious of the militants had been removed, to the profit of the opportunists who had taken charge, assisted by Khider. The latter counted on their support in order to win the struggle which had broken out between himself and Ben Bella for power. In reality no solution had as yet been found to the crisis of July, and many discouraged militants lost interest in political life. Under these conditions no work of formation and explanation could be done. The absence of the Party made itself felt in all areas, that of production included.

The positive aspects were nonetheless also numerous: even if badly, the workers had immediately gone back to work again. And the fact that responsibility was placed in the hands of Algerians — their brothers — satisfied their idea of nationalism and the reasons which they had had for fighting so hard for seven years.

Furthermore, the idea of socialism, of which most Algerians had thought rather badly in the beginning, began to spread, thanks to the official speeches, and little by little was rehabilitated by self-administration. Self-administration, in fact, meant: "the land for the peasants, the factories for the workers".

Finally, the workers began to realize, if only empirically, that they could in this way constitute a serious obstacle to the bourgeoisie's recovery of control over the national economy, since they were going to become a force which from then on had to be reckoned with. And they were ready to fight in order to preserve these vacant properties which had become collectively theirs.

The domains turned over to self-administration comprise units of production of important dimensions. From the beginning the division of the lands had been excluded. For in becoming vacant these lands had become the property of the state, even if their management had been entrusted to the workers' collectives. But this system of self-administration affected only the rich domains of the French colonists, and two or three *vattes* properties belonging to Algerians. As for the small landowner — the *fellah* — who in the process of colonisation had been pushed onto the poorest lands, he was affected neither by this system of manage-

arrive in the near future with the crude oil in question. They began to wait for the cargo to arrive; week after week went by, and they waited in vain. In order to keep up the work, the plant-director had to turn to another concern, a private company, under ordinary conditions a competitor. This plant belonged to a very large French firm. This firm lent a certain quantity of oil sufficient for the plant to operate at a slowdown pace while it awaited the arrival of the ship. It turned out that this ship was not lost for everybody, since the private competitor, which was also to be refurnished by the same ship, had received its quota. The ship had been lost only for the managing committee. Obviously here again, when the scandal finally broke out, the long-awaited cargo suddenly appeared as if by magic.

What was true for industry was also true for agriculture. Many agricultural managing committees fell behind schedule in the work in the fields, simply because the seeds, for example, which were supposed to be furnished by the S.A.P.,³ did not arrive on time. Repairing a motor could take months and cost an outrageous amount. While the salary of a worker in the self-administrated agricultural sector had been fixed at 7.70 D.A. (or 7.50 Francs) a day, the S.A.P. made the administrative committee pay 25 D.A. an hour for repair work. This happened so often that the workers from the cities, in a wave of solidarity, decided to spend a part of their weekly day off on the farms, in order to repair the material themselves, while a certain number of students went with them in order to help the peasants out with their bookkeeping. It goes without saying that most of the time this undertaking was not viewed with a very favorable eye by the officials of the S.A.P., who began to fear for their jobs. Having become in fact the big bosses in this area, they could not tolerate that their competence should be questioned by simple workers or young students. Besides, the struggle between the administrative committees and the S.A.P. had begun already a long time ago, and the peasants did not fail to denounce them every time a congress was held.

These battles were besides only the reflection of a battle which was taking place on another level. And this battle was political. The leaders had wanted self-administration, it is true, but it should not acquire too much importance in the affairs of the country. Otherwise, many of them -- and particularly in the ministries on which self-administration was directly dependent -- risked seeing their positions put in danger. The only person who had not been attacked, overtly at least, was Ben Bella. It was not uncommon to hear the workers declare that, except for the

³ Branch organ of the Office of Agrarian Reform, concerned with the bookkeeping of the administrative committees as well as with supplying them with fertilizers and seeds, with the reparation of agricultural machinery, and with the salaries of agricultural workers.

President, his whole entourage was rotten. They forgot that these men had been chosen by Ben Bella partly for political reasons. In the term "rotten" not only a moral judgement was expressed. In the minds of the workers, all those who did not help self-administration were enemies. They were people therefore who were against "Algerian socialism". If the political context of the period is taken into account, they were right. They realized in addition that their conflicts with the tutelary organizations could only take place because these latter drew their support from "high up". Otherwise — they said — how would you explain the fact that, every time a problem depended only on the administrative committee, they were able to find a solution; but every time that one of the tutelary organizations had to be called in, there was a scene. This was frequently the case, since bookkeeping, salaries, seeds, fertilizers, repair or purchase of materials, raw or refined, commerce, and loans, all depended upon these organizations. And yet they had been created to mediate between the committees and the various ministries, and above all to compensate for the lack of leadership by centralizing a certain number of administrative functions. And thus the power which was supposed to belong to the workers, had been turned around in this way and placed in the hands of these organizations, whether tutelary or those of the local political authorities, who, whenever a dispute arose between the president of a committee and the director, usually supported the second. And this even in defiance of the decrees.

This form of direct democracy, then, which self-administration could have been, was not applied. This was chiefly for two reasons: the first was clearly because of Algeria's under-development (the lack of minor leaders to co-ordinate administrative and technical operations within the various enterprises made itself felt), and because of the lack of the education of the workers, who acted empirically. The second came from the fact the local authorities, profiting by their position within Algerian society, held the real power, in deed and word, which rightfully belonged to the committees. On several occasions, certain leftist elements of the F.L.N., as well as some young union-organizers who had been removed from positions of responsibility, had spoken out against such usurpation of power to the detriment of the workers in the socialist sector, whom they firmly supported in their congresses and pre-congress sessions. On these occasions it was admitted in official circles that they were right, but that did not change anything: the "administrative bourgeoisie", which had grown up with extreme rapidity, frequently omitting to pass higher decisions down, was the stronger.

This bourgeoisie, sometimes called "bureaucracy", making one confusion after another, did not possess the enterprises or the plantations. But it held the power, and had managed to put its men in positions of

to the *Sociétés Agricoles de Prévoyance* (S.A.P.), organisations created during the colonial period for the purpose of aiding and advising the peasants. There he would have acquired the experience qualifying him to be named a director. Since Algeria had a considerable lack of qualified leaders, it was necessary to take those who had a minimum of competence for this sort of responsibility. But within the committee they were the ones who represented the state, and, finding strength in their new official rôle, their power over the enterprise often became absolute. This is why the workers' councils (for enterprises involving more than thirty workers), when they existed, really only existed in theory, because the director or the chief manager would himself take on all the responsibilities and with them all the rights, those of "pre"nt as well as those of the workers' collectives. Since the Party, whose local chiefs in many cases were despised by the people and considered to be incompetent opportunists, was in effect absent, the workers began to have doubts: this was not the sort of autonomy which had once been promised to them. But since at the same time they also feared these new feudal élites who were theoretically supposed to help them and give them advice, they did not yet dare to make any demands; besides, they did not even know how that could be possible.

In spite of the enormous failings of a political party whose job was supposed to be to form the workers, and above all to explain to them correctly how self-administration was supposed to work, one might think that the party's place could be taken by the press and the radio (television existed only in the cities). For transistor radios can be found all over the *bled*. But here again there was a serious failing: the programs in French seemed hardly interested in these problems, and affected only those who spoke this language (which means relatively few people); as for the programs in Arabic, it should be sufficient to say that only a minority could understand them perfectly, since the radio announcers spoke "classical" Arabic, whereas the language of the countryside is dialect. As for the press: more than 80% of Algerians are illiterate. The radio had then, in spite of everything, a larger audience than the newspapers or the billboards. But the press was more or less in the hands of leftist elements who supported self-administration and tried to explain it, whereas the radio was controlled by people who were often on the other side.

All this favored the adversaries of self-administration and reinforced their positions. Now self-administration, which was supposed to realise the Algerian program of socialism, was also, in the minds of those who had instituted it, supposed to prevent the formation of a new bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie, which was very much aware of this, and had acquired a considerable weight by inserting itself in all of the political, economic, and administrative machinery of the country, tried with all of the means at its disposal, if not to sabotage self-administration openly, at least to do

nothing to make it work; and in this the bourgeoisie enjoyed a notable measure of success. For those who were working for self-administration could become a danger to it. This was why people were dropped, "parachuted", into the administrative committees, and why the decrees had not been seriously discussed; and so forth. But all this had given rise to such abuses, such conflicts (which often went so far as to end in violent fights), and so many protests, in those cases where the militants had been able to explain the decrees to the workers, that things could not possibly go on much longer in this way. If the workers were not to be allowed to abandon their prerogatives in disgust and for good to those who pretended to represent them, and who belonged precisely to this new bourgeoisie, then it was urgently necessary to publicise the decrees in order to regain the confidence of those who were working for self-administration. On the national level, a campaign for the "democratic election and reorganisation of the administrative committees" was launched by President Ben Bella in May, 1963. Ministers and political leaders agreed to leave Algiers in order to take part in this information campaign. It was high time: production had gone down and the workers were no longer interested in the political life of the country. This campaign produced the desired effect for several weeks. There were finally some elections. The decrees became known, even if they were not very well understood. As for their application, that was another thing.

What was asked in fact of a general workers' assembly, that is, of the permanent workers in an agricultural or industrial enterprise? According to the decrees it was supposed to draw up the general regulations of the enterprise and determine its development plan, within the framework of national planning (assuming that this existed and the administrators knew about it); it was supposed to approve the accounts, and finally, to make the financial and economic decisions for the enterprise. It was also supposed to elect the workers' council if the enterprise consisted of more than thirty workers. This council, when it exists, has the job of making internal regulations, deciding on the purchase and sale of property or material, deciding on long- or medium-term loans, and examining the books. It must meet at least once a month, at the request of the managing committee, which it elects and controls. Obviously, if the enterprise is a small one, this body does not exist and its functions are taken over by the general assembly.

As for the managing committee itself, its task is still greater: it is supposed to work out in detail the decisions taken by the workers' council, to strengthen the council in the direction which it gives to the enterprise, and to supplement the council in the application of its resolutions; it is the executive arm of the workers' council. It is also concerned with the details of running the enterprise, with short-term loans; and with the

manner of commercialization of production. Finally, it prepares the decisions of the workers' council (which in principle is above the managing committee) and elects its president.

The president of the managing committee has to execute in his own name the decisions taken, sign financial notes, be the civil representative of the enterprise in its legal dealings, and cast the deciding vote in the case of stalemate in the meetings of the committee. This is a great deal to ask of workers who are for the most part illiterate. And it is partly for this reason that self-administration, in the form in which it was defined by the March decrees, could never exist; its successful operation was hampered by the material, political, economic, and social conditions. One of the natural obstacles, let us say, was under-development itself. Under-development means illiteracy. Which means that the workers who were supposed to replace collectively the former supervisor in a certain number of tasks were not in a position to do it, simply because they knew neither how to read nor write nor count, even if they were technically able to master the work disciplines of a modern agricultural or industrial operation. In addition, their "advisors" of the tutelary organisations took advantage of their positions by doing their work for them. They became in fact the pivot on which self-administration rested. Thus the S.A.P., an arm of the National Office of Agrarian Reform, had for the managing committee become the cashier, the supply clerk, and the bookkeeper; by order of the decrees, but also because in each committee there were not enough elements capable of discharging the responsibilities of bookkeeping and other administrative operations. This is why the tutelary organisations had become the true directors of the administrative committees, even when the workers were not in agreement.

It was for these reasons that the directors of the administrative committees could become what the workers called "new bosses", all-powerful because the workers, despite the rôle which rightfully belonged to them, were not in a position to check them. And even when they were convinced of the dishonesty of their representatives (which happened only too frequently) they could not prove it and did not know to whom they should turn for help. All too often, too, even when they had managed to draw up a dossier and send it to the tutelary authorities, or even directly to the minister — for they did not always have faith in the organisations which were supposed to help them (these famous tutelary authorities) — their complaints were left unanswered, and it was necessary for a scandal to break out openly before the authorities would do anything. Such was the case of "ACILOR", Algeria's most important metallurgical concern, located in Oran. There had been some misuse of funds, for which the president of the administrative committee and the auditor were apparently responsible, as well as a technical advisor who had disappeared with a

portion of company money. The workers had become aware of it only when they observed that the style of life of these various persons had changed remarkably for the better, whereas they themselves were paid irregularly. Numerous other points of dissatisfaction had come up in addition to this one, and with the aid of an assistant bookkeeper they had drawn up the famous dossier which lay for three or four months on the minister's desk. But nobody took any action on their complaints. Then the decisive incident took place: the press exposed the whole affair. The minister himself went to Oran to see that justice was done. He took the March decrees with him, which he distributed to the workers, telling them to study and apply them; and after a long speech, had the two individuals who were immediately responsible for the scandal arrested, with much to-do. For him, the case was closed. As for the workers: they thought that much more should have been done, that is, that those who were responsible for the administrative slowness the officials of the *Préfecture*, the *Union Régionale du Syndicat*, and the party federation, should have been punished as well; because they had known about everything, had the power to do something about it, and had not done it.

Another example may be introduced in order to illustrate briefly the political struggles which took place in Algeria between the partisans of self-administration and those of private enterprise, Algerian or foreign.² This is the case of the *Huilleries d'Afrique du Nord*. Under pressure from the workers, the plant had been put under the control of a managing committee in October, 1963. Until this time it had been shut down, and the workers' only activity was keeping the material in order. They were virtually unemployed as a result of the shutdown. Therefore the pressure which they brought to bear, saying rightly that already there were not enough plants to provide work for everybody and that therefore Algeria could not allow itself the luxury of keeping one shut down when it was in perfectly good working condition.

They pushed their point so hard and so well, aided by union organizers, that the plant began to roll again. There were not enough technicians, but everyone knew his work, and the man who had been named director seemed competent. At the beginning they worked with the stocks which the plant possessed already. Then the problem of the renewal of the raw materials came up, that is, the crude oil, of which a large part had to be imported. They consulted the office commissioned by the government to deal with such problems. They were told that a ship was supposed to

² Up to the time that Colonel Boumedienne took power, on June 19th, 1965, about 450 enterprises had been put under administrative committees, as well as 2.8 million hectares of land, or 1/3 of the total area of Algeria. As for the so-called traditional sector, it consisted of 4 million hectares of arable land, for 8 million Algerians. It should be added that the life of 1/10 of the total population depends on agricultural self-administration.

ment, not by an agrarian reform of a more classic sort. He was in fact left to his own devices, and economically speaking nothing has been changed for him by the fact of independence. In Algeria, then, there is what could be called an agrarian dualism; and this is still true today.

It should be pointed out that all these properties which had become "vacant" were not always placed under the supervision of an administrative committee: since independence, in fact, the A.N.P. (the National Popular Army, whose numbers have swollen beyond all measure since the Evian agreements, and whose chief is Colonel Boumedienne) succeeded in taking over a number of vacant lands, more or less throwing out the workers who occupied them, and putting in soldiers to work them in their place. The army did not hesitate even to expropriate certain of the civilian collectives. There then grew up a veritable rivalry between the A.N.P. and the F.L.N. In this process were revealed two conceptions of "socialist" democracy: wherever the Party was the first to establish itself, there were administrative committees; where the army had taken hold, there were co-operatives where the civilian and political authorities had no rights of any kind.

But the number of administrative committees was obviously superior to that of the co-operatives. And from October to March nearly 900,000 hectares were affected by this measure... During this period two personalities were involved in a struggle for power: one was the chief of the Party, Khider; the other was the head of the state, Ben Bella. In reality neither the party nor the state were truly established. *Wilay-ism* — regionalism — intensified first by the war, then by the July crisis, divided the country into a multitude of clans, which all demanded their share of the pie and exerted pressure in all areas and upon all public personalities. Politicians were dealing with clients rather than with constituents. And according to the interests of the moment, they were for the party or for the state.

In January 1963, Khider called the first congress of the U.G.T.A. (the General Union of Algerian Workers, the only union), whose leaders had played an important part in the armed struggle and were renowned for having Marxist tendencies, these having been acquired, in most cases, in prison. It was several of these leaders who immediately after independence had taken the initiative of going into the *bled* and to economic factories with the object of setting up administrative committees. By this action they were on the way to becoming the true leaders of that part of Algeria which was active, and were encouraging the formation of a class-consciousness which could only hurt those in power at the time. In fact: as soon as the class-struggle became more important than the quarrels of persons or of clans, it became more difficult to acquire power merely on the basis of past services.

In order better to control the elections of the directors of the U.G.T.A., Khider had unemployed persons brought in by truck who voted for the man that he had chosen. The former directors were removed, and general demoralization ensued. Ben Bella found himself for the moment without an instrument, and thus in a position of weakness, in this race which he continued to run against the General Secretary of the Party for the conquest of total power. Controlled by young Marxists, Ben Bella put his stakes on the administrative committees: he knew his peasants well. And the decrees of March, 1963 legalized the existing state of affairs, making the quasi-spontaneous establishment of committees of administration by the workers in the properties which had been abandoned by the French *colons* appear to be the result of a socialist initiative of the government.

On the 19th of March a decree regarding the status of the vacant properties confirmed once and for all their vacancy, granting to the enterprises the "moral personality of private right". A second decree appeared the same day concerning the creation of the National Office of Agrarian Reform (O.N.R.A.). This office was charged with organizing the administration of the vacant plantations and with carrying out the government's program of agrarian reform. A few days later, on March 22nd, a new decree was issued on the organization of the form of administration of industrial, mining, and artisan operations, as well as that of the vacant agricultural enterprises. This was in effect the decree which instituted self-administration. Finally, on March 28th, a fourth decree determined the manner in which the revenue of the enterprises involved with self-administration was to be divided. These decrees were strongly influenced by the model of workers' self-management as practiced in Yugoslavia.

How does self-administration work? Theoretically, the workers' assembly, constituted by all of the permanent workers in an enterprise, meets to elect an administrative committee whose members must be a part of that enterprise. This committee, once elected, chooses a president. Alongside this workers' collective whose job is to run the enterprise, the state is represented by a director or administrator who is technically responsible for the property. Still theoretically, this director, *under authorization from the president*, keeps the enterprises going by applying the decisions of the managing committee and of the workers' council.

In actual fact, the members of the administrative committees, instead of being elected, are often named by the "tutelage authorities": the National Office of Agrarian Reform (O.N.R.A.), the *Préfecture*, the local Party section, or other administrative officials. The workers, even after the publication of the decrees, did not know of their existence. Also, despite their dissatisfaction, they did not dare to interfere. They were happy whenever the president or his assistant had belonged to the enterprise before his "election". As for the director, he would often have belonged

control. And in spite of a leftist, socializing terminology it practiced rightist policy, materially favoring the sector of private property which had remained dominant in the Algerian economy. The example of the *Huilleries d'Afrique du Nord* shows this. Much was promised to the unemployed, to the poor peasants, and to the workers under self-administration, but to the carrying-out of these promises the building of luxury hotels was preferred, with the pretext of developing tourism. Or the whitewashing of the streets of Algiers, rather than the reconstructing of the villages which had been destroyed by the war, or the creation of new factories in order to begin finding a solution to the problem of unemployment. Whereas the living standard of the workers was very low — those in the agricultural sector were paid 750 D.A. for each workday — and their housing was very poor because the local officials had taken over the living quarters on the property, a stable party worker earned between 800 and 1200 D.A. a month, and a soldier about 400 D.A. "For doing nothing", the workers said. And for them the proof that these "bourgeois" were not socialists was that they only came rarely — when they were forced into it by the circumstances — to inform themselves about the workers' difficulties. They preferred in fact to remain in the cities, because it is there that everything is always decided; or when the weather was good, to go themselves on the magnificent Algerian beaches which the ministry of tourism had refurbished. One of the reasons for this attitude derives from the fact that a majority of the Algerian leaders are only nationalists for whom the accession of their country to independence was only a way to take the place of the colonialists. Now, from their point of view, free enterprise is still the surest way of satisfying their personal ambition, next to having an important job in the government or party machinery. Their political positions, obviously, reflect their economic functions; hence their attitude towards self-administration.

A third reason why self-administration encounters so many difficulties: the structures themselves of independent Algeria. The "socialist sector" is surrounded from both above and below by capitalist enterprises, upon which it depends to a great extent for supply and commerce. It is therefore easy to strangle it. These are the economic aspects.

On the political level, whereas Algeria has been able to call itself socialist, thanks to self-administration, no organ has really been created through which the workers in this sector would be able to express themselves. There had been some discussion of establishing Communal Councils for the Animation of Self-Administration, which were to function as a liaison between the different committees in a community and the higher authorities. These community councils were to consist of the presidents of the administrative committees, and representatives of the Party, the Army, the U.G.T.A., the tutelary organisations, and the local

administrative councils. Only now is there talk of actually creating such councils; but it is doubtful whether this will change the state of affairs described above, considering the sort of persons who will participate in these councils.

Nor does there exist any organ of control to verify whether self-administration is actually put into practice. Although self-administration has been from the beginning, and continues to be, the left guard of the two régimes which Algeria has had since independence, no representative of self-administration has been included on the various boards and councils which make important decisions in the name of the workers under this system. Obviously, when one compares the workers in the socialist sector with those of the private sector, and above all with the countless unemployed (officially, at this moment, one worker in four is employed), they might appear privileged. They have work, a salary, even if they are paid irregularly, and, in principle at least, they participate in the profits of their enterprise. In fact, once the administrative committee has paid off its debts to the various funds defined by the March decrees — amortizing funds, national investment funds, *et cetera* — the remainder should be divided among the permanent workers in the enterprise. The exact portion which goes to these different funds has not really been made clear. But it is these "privileged" workers who have made it possible to speak of Algerian socialism, and have made Algeria the focal point of the Third World during an entire historical period.

What can be said of self-administration at the present time? In contrast to the conditions which prevailed before the 19th of June, we have been getting only bits and snatches of information, official or otherwise. The official texts, interesting as they may be, have little value unless they are followed up by direct on-the-spot investigations. What is clear is that again numerous promises have been made. And they are often the same ones which were made under Ben Bella. One of them, however, has been kept: that of the establishment of a national bank which will finance the units of production directly. Another thing is certain: that a certain number of concerns, once under self-administration, have been retaken by the new authorities and given to the veterans (the former *Moudjahidines*), who have in a sense become the new owners. This is because the army needed to form a new basis of popular support, capable of sustaining it against the Algerian masses, who continue to take a reserved attitude towards it. Thus these favors granted to the former *Moudjahidines*, who had hardly been recognized, it is true, under Ben Bella. But the poor peasants had received no favors either, nor the unemployed. Without self-administration Algeria is no longer "socialist". Without actually doing away with it — it must be proven that the basic options remain the same — the new leaders have preferred to leave it to



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its own resources, without helping it, with more than enough to make it disintegrate.

Because of the firm protests of the unions, through their newspaper, and the sometimes very violent reaction of the workers affected by this measure; whose comrades came to give them a strong helping hand, a part of these properties was put back under self-administration. The same measures were equally applied to certain industrial enterprises, using the already worn excuse that they were losing money.

In fact, in spite of the change which took place on the top level, the machinery of the country has remained the same; Ben Bella's ministers have kept their positions. And if certain individuals were removed, the reasons for this do not appear to be political. There is therefore no *a priori* reason why things should change. All the more since it was clear from the very beginning that the Army was very much opposed to the sort of decentralization which the successful functioning of self-administration would have involved. The army's co-operatives are a proof of this.

In any case it is certain that, in spite of the corruption, inefficiency, *et cetera* of the Ben Bella period, which was rightly attacked by the new régime, the workers were able to express themselves, even if only through their congresses, or through the nation-wide press. The press was able to deplore the unhappy situation of self-administration and even to propose solutions without fear of censorship. At the moment the union newspaper no longer appears, since it openly expressed its disagreement with the decision to turn over to the veterans the properties which belonged to the socialist sector.

As for bureaucracy, whose formation was to have been prevented thanks to self-administration, in the spirit of those who promoted the March decrees, it flourishes.

Our Generation

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